



**Cambridge Human Rights Commission  
Thursday, February 2, 2012**

Present: Commissioners Elaine Angelone, Chanta Bhan, Bonita Cox, Mercedes Evans, Melissa Gonzalez-Brenes, Clio Stearns and Caitlin Steirman; staff members Mariah Freark and Colleen Johnston.

Guests: Superintendent Christopher Burke, Cambridge Police Department; Bill Cunningham from ACT; Marla Erlien; Michele Sprengnether

Documents Used: January 2012 minutes; Executive Director's Report.

Chair Gonzalez-Brenes called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

**1. Recording of Meeting**

No one was recording the meeting

**2. Public Comment**

Marla Erlien expressed her concern that the Commission was losing its focus on important issues concerning undocumented immigrants. She also stated that she was concerned about the progress of the Schools subcommittee.

Bill Cunningham from the Alliance for Cambridge Tenants stated that he was there for the discussions of the schools issues and the federalization of public housing.

**3. Review and Approval of January Minutes**

The January minutes were approved unanimously.

**4. Discussion with representative from the Community Engagement Team (tentative)**

Executive Director Johnston informed the Commission that Carol from the CET will be at the March meeting.

**5. Discussion of federalization of public housing**

Commissioner Evans informed the Commission that the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA) is federalizing properties to upgrade them, and there are concerns about the effects this action will have on undocumented immigrants. She stated she put this issue on the agenda to get further information. Executive Director Johnston and Mr. Cunningham from ACT explained that CHA's proposed for its federal properties to move from a property-based model to a subsidy-based model. A discussion was had about the problems facing public housing due to budget cuts. It was decided that this issue should be put on the MAHRC agenda, that Ellen Schechter Susan Heigl from Legal Services should be invited to speak to MAHRC about the issue. It was also decided the Executive Director Johnston would contact Chris Cotter at the Community Development Department to invite him to address the Commissioners about this issue.

**6. Updates from subcommittees**

**a. Schools**

Commission Evans reported that the subcommittee reviewed the info received from Ms. Sprengnether and spent their last meeting discussing the integration formulas. Commission Evans reported that the

subcommittee tabled discussions about the report outline and timelines until they received more information from the School Department.

**b. Rules**

Commissioner Angelone informed the Commissioners that the process is moving along. Attorney Investigator Freark summarized the subcommittee's tentative timeline for the Commission.

**c. Immigrant Rights**

Chair Gonzalez-Brenes informed the Commission that she attended a meeting with Cambridge United for Justice and Peace, where they discussed holding a forum addressing immigrants' rights as part of a larger picture of everyone's rights. The tentative name for this forum is "First They Came for the Immigrants: A forum on human rights, civil rights, your rights." A discussion was had about whether and how the CHRC could participate in this forum. Chair Gonzalez-Brenes made a motion to cosponsor this event with Cambridge United for Justice and Peace and possibly the ACLU, and invite other organizations to attend and participate in this forum. Commissioner Stearns seconded the motion. Commissioners Angelone, Bhan, Cox, Evans, Stearns and Chair Gonzalez-Brenes voted in favor of the motion. Commissioner Steirman voted against the motion. The motion passed. The Commission agreed that details on venue and time were to be determined.

**7. Update on shelter survey**

Executive Director Johnston informed the Commission that they are nearly done with their first set of data and are trying to close out the survey. She hopes to report back to the Commission in the next month or two.

**8. Update on Community Learning Center Presentations**

Executive Director Johnston informed the Commission that she is waiting for the CLC's new Civics Education Coordinator to get in touch with her to discuss presentations.

**9. Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director Johnston reported on staff activities, advised Commissioners of upcoming meetings of interest, and gave case updates. Attorney Investigator Freark passed around the updated lead flyer for comment.

**10. New Business**

Chair Gonzalez-Brenes advised the Commission that the next meeting will be a working meeting, and she will be out of town but she will update Executive Director Johnston on the status of the event. Executive Director Johnston reminded the Commissioners that Carol from the CET will be coming, so the next meeting may be half full meeting and half working meeting. Commissioner Bhan informed the Commission that she will be unable to attend the April meeting.

**11. List of outstanding issues**

Chair Gonzalez-Brenes will follow up on the event. Commissioner Evans stated that she may be able to attend the MAHRC meeting and follow up on informing them of the federalization of public housing. Executive Director Johnston stated that she will follow up with Chris Cotter. Attorney Investigator Freark said she will email out the lead flyer and listserv text for Commissioners' further review.

**12. Break into subcommittees: Schools, Immigrant Rights, Rules**

The subcommittees met briefly to schedule their next meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Next Commission meeting will be held on Thursday, March 1, 2012 at 6:00 p.m.